

# Networking

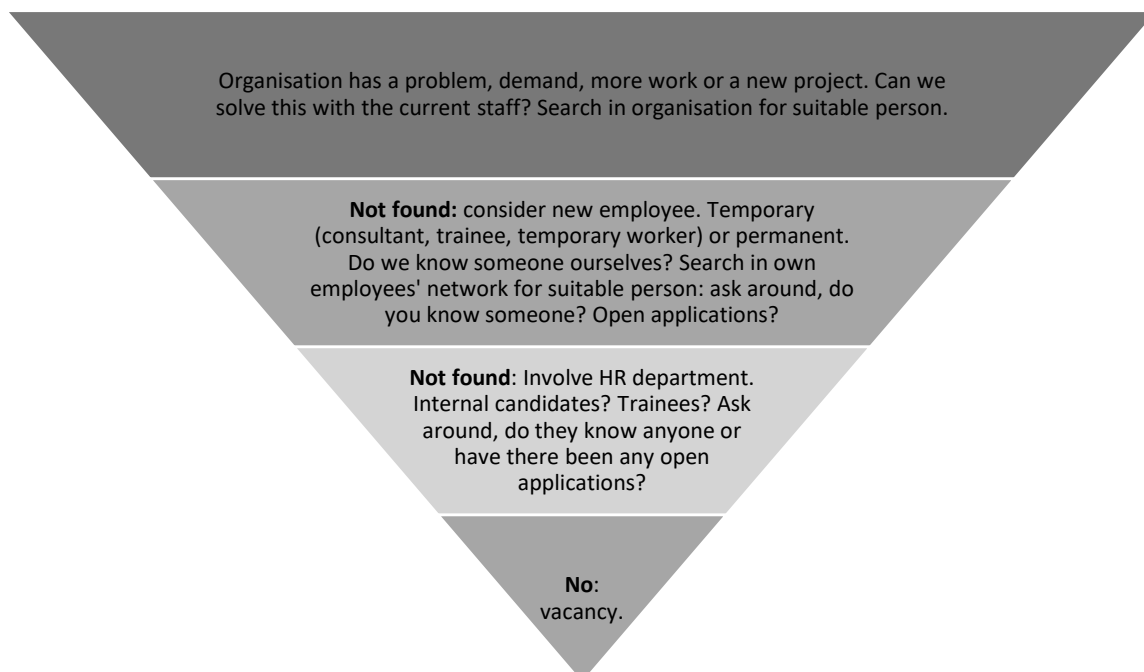
Establishing and maintaining contact with other people, which may benefit you at another time. The foundation of a good network is trust. Networking is often perceived as inappropriate, difficult, or scary. It might help to try to look at it from a different perspective: from the idea that networking is a matter of *give* and *take*. Networking is “passing information from one person to another, in order to be of use to each other”. Sometimes you can help someone, sometimes someone helps you. So you too can help your network by sharing tips, ideas, contact details or information. This does not have to be information to help someone get a job, it can also be an interesting podcast, article, or conference. It is about the long term and about how you can do something for each other. You probably already subconsciously do this more often than you realise, for example when you exchange tips with fellow students, friends, and family.

You will find that networking can be inspiring, when you are talking to someone about something that excites both of you or about questions that you both struggle with. You can achieve more together than alone. Networking is not only fun, but it can also bring you a lot, because research shows that no less than 70% of the vacancies are directly or indirectly filled via networks. An extra reason to invest in your network!

Do not see networking as a goal itself, but as a way of getting somewhere, a skill. You can develop this skill by practicing, by trial and error, just like with cycling. In the end it is a matter of just doing it. If you are already consciously establishing new contacts during your studies, can bring you a lot in the future.

## Not all vacancies can be found online

Below you can see how a vacancy is created.



Ideally, you would like to be aware of position, as far upstream as possible. That is when your chances are greatest. At each step you have a chance to enter a conversation and to learn more about the content of the job and what it requires. Many vacancies are not even posted online. And if they are, there is a chance that someone who has been in the picture earlier in the process will be given priority. So, make sure you are known in a positive way in your favourite organisations, through an interview or internship.

## Why is having a network valuable?

Your network:

- Knows about jobs;
- Knows people who are applying for jobs;
- Knows people who you could be interesting to;
- Knows people that are of interest to you;
- Is familiar with current and future trends within a sector and/or companies.

## Your network

### Your private network

Essentially, anyone who knows or has known you and has a positive impression of you is part of your network. This includes your family, friends, (former) fellow students, (former) teachers, former classmates, study/student association, sports association, (former) colleagues, alumni of your study programme or university. On average, a person knows about 350 people, so there is enough information to have little to good contact. Maybe your family, friends or acquaintances do not have the job you dream of, but they too meet all sorts of people every day at work, at the sports club, at birthday parties, etc. With 10 friends who also know 350 people, you will soon have 3500 people that could be of use to you! So ask about the careers of people around you or ask questions about the company they work for. Network with people you get along with, it will make conversations easier. Talk about what you like and find interesting or important. Often, you will automatically get suggestions that you have not thought of yet, but can help you.

### Lecturers

Your lecturers all have a network of their former students and current students who have ended up in interesting positions. Who knows, they might still have a subsidiary position, or they might have worked in interesting organisations.

### Guest lecturers

During your studies, you will regularly hear guest speakers at lectures. Is there a story that really appeals to you? Write down the name of the speaker and the company. Who knows, you might be able to approach them later on, for example when you are looking for an internship or job. You can thank this person for the guest lecture, say that you found it interesting and ask if you can connect with them on LinkedIn. This way, you can easily remember this person, see new updates and the other person can also more easily remember you (for example, when they are looking for a new colleague).

## Online networking

- Subscribe to newsletters and follow interesting companies on (professional) social media;
- Make sure that your offline and online personal branding match;
- Make sure that people can find you online;
- LinkedIn: make sure your profile looks well and matches your CV;
- Know which search words are used to find information or people;

- Try to arrange a face-to-face meeting;
- Keep your private (social media) and professional networks separate.

## Offline networking

Offline networking is just as important as online networking. Furthermore, people now see you in real life which means that they can get a picture of you even better. Offline network opportunities include:

- Career fairs, conferences, receptions or other (networking) events
- Birthdays
- (Telephone/online) appointments
- Training, study or course, e.g. interesting guest speaker
- 'Work shadowing' – shadow someone for a day at work

## Networking skills

Networking skills are developed over time. Some people are naturally better at networking than others. A couple of networking skills are:

- Being a good listener
- Wanting a being able to share knowledge
- Showing empathy
- Flexibility
- Perseverance
- A broad range of interests
- Helpfulness

## Networking with people you do not know (well)

- **Preparation:** Everything hinges on being well-prepared. You want to acquire information and leave a good impression. Take the time to answer the following questions before you go networking. You want to gather information and make a good impression. Take time to think for yourself beforehand:
  - What would you like to achieve?
  - When?
  - When you make contact with a person, what information can you already find out about them?
  - What questions or assumptions do you have?
  - How can you be of use to the other person?

- **Approaching someone:** always explain how you came across their name and contact details. Ask if they have time to talk to you. Make sure you confirm your appointment by e-mail, or ask for a confirmation.

Having a discussion via LinkedIn is a good way to expand your network. Always try to add a message when connecting with someone. Create a unique and personalised invitation every time: it makes people more likely to accept your invitation. Here you can find some examples:

*Examples:*

Dear ..,

The lecture on ... was very interesting to me! I would like to be informed about your work.

Kind regards, ...

Hello ..,

I see that you work as ... (position). I am in the process of job orientation, and your job sounds interesting. Do you have time to tell me more about it?

Best regards, ...

Dear ...

I see that you also studied [study] at the Radboud University. I am in the process of looking for a job and would like to talk to you about how you ended up at ... [name of organisation].

Kind regards, ...

Hi ..,

I read your blog about ... with interest. I would like to keep in touch with you through LinkedIn. Regards...

- **Opening a networking conversation:** Introduce yourself politely. Tell them the reason for the conversation. Name a similarity (group, education, contact, company, study association) and anticipate the reaction of your conversation partner, make room for small talk. 'When in Rome, do as the Romans do', i.e. adapt to the person you are talking to in terms of appearance, speaking tempo, word usage, etc. When you feel it is time to get to the point, ask your first serious question.
- **During a networking conversation:** it is especially important to show interest, to listen well, to empathise with the other person and to ask good questions. It is pleasant for the other person to have a partner who pays full attention and is interested in them. Take notes during the conversation. Do not get distracted by your phone or other things, keep your attention to the person you are talking to. Show something of yourself now and then, e.g. if you have been through similar experiences yourself.
- **Towards the end of the conversation:** say you enjoyed the conversation, ask if you can stay in touch via e-mail or LinkedIn. If you want to 'cut off' a conversation, do this politely. Indicate that you would like to talk to others as well.
- **Afterwards:** find out if there are ways in which you can inspire or help the other person, e.g. through an interesting article, video, podcast, etc. Do not be concerned if you cannot do something immediately in return. Who knows how you can be of help to someone in the future. Connect via LinkedIn and refer to your conversation in your connection request.

## Maintaining your network

- Maintain your good name: do not refer people if you doubt their motives.
- Networking is based on mutual trust.
- Treat your network with care and invest in your relationships. Do not just 'come and get it', but also give feedback on what it has brought you and help others.
- Do not forget who helped you, always say thank you. If someone gave you a tip that you followed, let them know what the result was.
- If you received a great tip, a small thank-you (a bunch of lowers, a bottle of wine, a personal thank-you) is probably appropriate.
- If you receive a tip that is not useful to you, remember it, perhaps you can help someone else with that tip. Let the tipster know.

## Example questions

Remember, almost everyone likes to talk about their job, so they will want to talk about it with you as well. Assumptions are deadly: if you 'think' you know something but you are not 100% sure, ask. The goal of the conversation is to discover if a company/ job is really for you and obtain important background information that you can use during the job application process. Show

that you have done your research and ask for specific information about developments at the company, the culture, a typical working day, the hiring policy and job application tips.

## About the position

- What does a regular workday / workweek look like for you?
- What are your tasks and responsibilities?
- What was a great moment in your job this week?
- What do you like the most / find most interesting about your job?
- What are the most important skills for your job?
- What kind of knowledge do you use most?
- In general; what does someone need to bring to be able to do your job properly?
- What kind of person do you need to be in terms of qualities, interests and motives?
- What kind of challenges do you face in your job?
- What is the difference, according to you, between this position and [other position]? What are the similarities?

## About the person

- What did you study?
- What kind of work did you do before you got this job?
- What are things you would like to learn or develop in the future? E.g. planning to do a training / course / follow-up education?
- Which people have been your most important teachers or inspirations?
- How did you get your job?
- Which steps did you take to get to this point?

## About the organisation

- How is the organisation structured?
- What is the company culture like? What are the positive sides and pitfalls according to you?
- What should someone be like to fit within this company?
- What does the recruitment policy / application procedure look like at this organisation? - ask if you could possibly speak to someone at HR
- What makes you proud of the company that you work at?
- What are some of the challenges that the company faces at the present time?
- What does the future from the company look like? What are the most important focus points of the organisation for the next 5 years (vision)?

## About the industry

- What are the positive sides, and what are the pitfalls in this industry?
- What are the differences between this industry and [other industry you're contemplating]? What are the similarities?
- What should someone be like to fit within this industry?
- What does the recruitment policy / application procedure look like within this industry?
- What are some of the challenges this industry faces at the present time?
- What are some of the important developments that are happening within this industry?

## Other

- I am orienting on the job market, do you know someone else that I could talk to / be interesting for me to get in touch with?

- Do you know of any events coming soon (e.g. congress, network meetings) that could be interesting for me?
- Do you know any interesting books, articles or websites for me to read?
- What does the recruitment policy look like within your organisation?
- Can I help you with something? E.g. get in touch with someone, forward information/articles?
- Can I send you my CV?
- Can I connect with you on LinkedIn? Can I get your business card?
- Would you mind letting me know if you come across something interesting for me?
- Do you have any other tips for me?

## **Training conversational skills**

Are you struggling with networking? Make an appointment with the Career Officer, so we can look at how you can improve yourself in this skill together.

